

Education Library

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Test Use in Admission, Placement and Guidance

Henry S. Dyer

Admission in a Women's College

Harriet Newhall

Admission in a Men's College

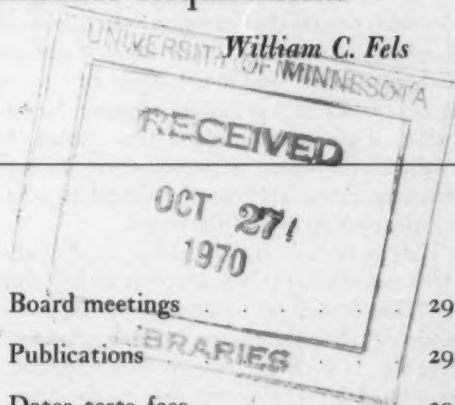
Eugene S. Wilson

The Influence of Tests and Entrance Requirements

William C. Fels

Also in this issue

Candidates increase	291	Board meetings	291
Uniform acceptance date	291	Publications	292
General Composition Test	291	Dates, tests, fees	292



The role of Board tests

in Admissions, Placement and Guidance

by HENRY S. DYER

One can hardly speak about the use of the College Board tests for selecting students without getting into a description of what the admission process is like in the Board colleges. This winter I visited twenty-five colleges to find out how admissions officers actually carry on their business, and although this experience scarcely qualifies me as an expert, it has given me a few ideas. In performing the admissions job, it seems to me, some officers lean toward one conception of what it is they are doing, and others lean toward an opposite conception. The differences are more psychological than methodological; they are reflected more clearly in the way the evidence on an applicant is interpreted than in the nature of the evidence itself or in the manner by which it is obtained. The most striking difference shows up in the effect of the tests on the final decision.

I shall call these contrasting notions of the admission process the Screening System and the Weighing System. Like most things in nature, neither system is ever found in the pure state, for in practice they get mixed together. Nevertheless, if we consider these two systems in unadulterated form, they may serve as convenient points of reference for describing what actually goes on behind the scenes.

The two systems are depicted in the diagrams which accompany this article. Let us look first at "The Screening System of College Admissions." Here the process is represented by a large bin. At the top the unprocessed applicants are poured in. They come first to the screen

labeled "Unit Requirements." This is usually a coarse screen through which most of the applicants pass easily on their journey through the system. The fineness of the mesh, however, depends on how picky the admissions office secretary is in making up the unit count and on the rigidity of the admissions officer himself in sticking to what he says in the catalog. Whatever the mesh, there are always some candidates who lack several units in English, languages, mathematics, or something or other, who therefore roll off the screen and slide through the top chute on the side of the bin. They are the first batch of rejects.

WARP AND WOOF

Directly beneath the Unit Requirements screen is a second, somewhat finer screen labeled "Quality of Record." Since the picture is only in two dimensions, I have been unable to show the warp and woof of this screen, but you can take my word for it that the warp is made up of school marks and the woof consists of rank-in-class. Many applicants who slip through the top screen get caught on this one. They roll out of the second chute.

Then comes the screen called "Principal's Report." The mesh of this screen is represented by a series of question marks, for its fineness varies with the principal who is reporting. If he is in the habit of labeling all of his candidates "A-1 double plus," then the screen is very coarse, but if he writes you a full and perceptive, if slightly ambiguous, description of each candi-

date, then the fineness of the screen depends on your ability at reading between the lines. In any event, there are always a few juvenile delinquents who get through the top two screens and slide out on this one.

Finally, we come to the last screen of all, the College Board scores. In this case the size of each hole in the screen is inversely proportional to the magnitude of the score that the admissions officer regards as unsatisfactory. If his eyebrows rise at anything below 500, the mesh of the screen is pretty fine, but if he doesn't noticeably boggle at a 300, the mesh is somewhat coarser. The difficulty in getting through this screen is also dependent on what tests the college requires. The applicant may find it harder to get through if he has to present scores on both the Scholastic Aptitude Test and three Achievement Tests than if he has to present scores on the SAT only.

The College Board score screen also has the interesting characteristic that it is removable at the option of the admissions officer. If he sees an apple-cheeked extrovert bouncing successfully through the screens above, he may quietly slip this screen aside and let the candidate drop directly into the pool of admitted applicants. This he can accomplish by either of two methods: he may waive the tests, or he may simply disregard the scores. One often finds

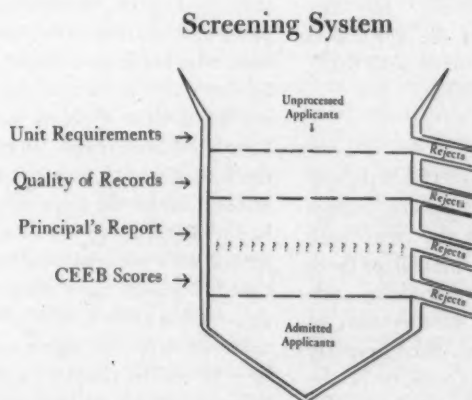
other screens, such as the Personal Interview, or the Report from an Alumnus, or a Health Certificate, but the four I have described are sufficient to show how the system works.

The Screening System has certain properties that recommend it and others that are likely to be a serious disadvantage, both to the applicant and to the college. I shall come back to these matters in a moment, but first let us have a look at the Weighing System, which you will find on page 269.

WEIGHING THE STUDENT

This picture represents a balance with weights on it. On the right-hand side of the balance is a single standard weight labeled "The Passing College Student." This the admissions officer, with his committee, has defined in advance. He may indeed use a series of standard weights, such as "The Average College Student," "The Superior College Student," or "The Outstanding College Student," any one of which can be put on the scales at will, depending upon the number of applicants he has and the quota he is expected to meet. The important point about these standards is that each one is considered as a single whole, that is, each is defined in terms of the overall performance of students now actually in college.

On the left-hand side of the balance we find



a series of variable weights representing the various items of evidence on a given candidate—the courses he has taken in high school, the quality of his high school record, the report of his principal, and his College Board scores. I could show other weights—the personal interview, the health certificate, and so on—but I don't want the picture to look too complicated. Each item of evidence is put on the balance as it becomes available, and if the whole combination balances the standard weight of a passing college student or an average college student, or whatever, the candidate is admitted. If, on the other hand, the weight of all the evidence does not come up to the weight of a passing college student, the candidate is rejected.

There are two main features of this system that differentiate it sharply from the Screening System. In the first place, no one item of evidence in the Weighing System can by itself decide the issue for or against the candidate. If, for example, he is deficient by a few units in his high school course, he still has a chance of being admitted, for the quality of his record, or the excellence of his test scores, may supply the necessary additional weight to tip the balance in his favor. Similarly, if the quality of his record is not up to par, a strong principal's report or high test scores may take care of the difference. In the Screening System, on the other hand, the several elements do not have these compensating relationships to one another, and any tampering with the screens as the applicants are filtering down is apt to be made with little, if any, knowledge of the final effect.

THE TYPES OF PASSERS

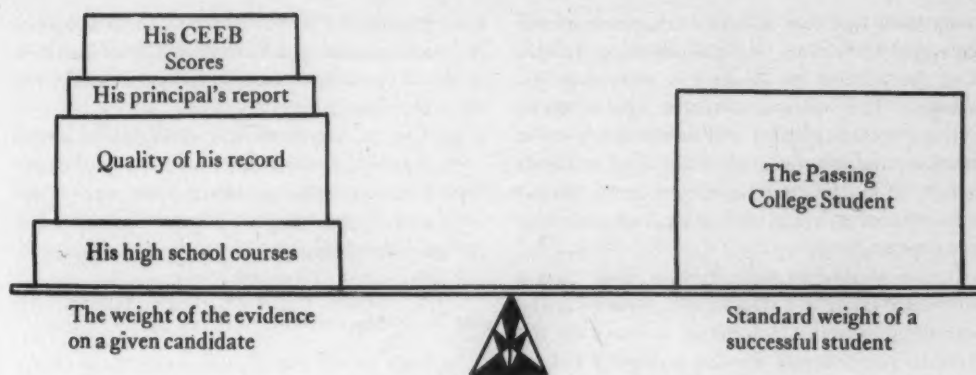
A second important feature of the Weighing System is the concept of the passing college student, which I have put on the right-hand side of the balance. Within any one college there may be many types of passing student, each depending on some peculiar combination of qualities. The Weighing System, when properly operated, therefore, guarantees variety in the student body, rather than the reverse. It also

has the important effect of focusing the admissions officer's attention not just on the candidate as he is but also on the kind of college student he is likely to become. In the Screening System the center of interest is inevitably on the candidate merely as compared with other candidates.

A very real advantage of the Screening System, however, is the simplicity of its operation. You can run it almost with your eyes shut. Just decide in advance what size screen to employ at each level, then pour in the applicants and let gravity do the rest. The obvious disadvantage is that while it may provide you with a good student body, it does not guarantee that you will get the best there is from among the available applicants. This is because many candidates rejected by the first or second screen might, if admitted, work out better as college students than those who actually sift all the way through.

READING IS BELIEVING

A less obvious disadvantage of the Screening System is the effect it can have on prospective applicants. I suspect that many high school students imagine that all college admissions are operated on the principle of the Screening System, despite protestations in college catalogs that it is the overall quality of the applicant that counts. This supposition is strongly encouraged by the tendency on the part of many colleges to list in anxious detail just how many units of English, foreign language, history, science, and mathematics they require. The student who believes what he reads and who may be short one or two of the required units will not waste time applying since he supposes, and rightly in some cases, that he will not get by the first screen. Another student who may have fulfilled all of the unit requirements, but who has frittered away his first three years of high school with so many extracurricular activities that his grades have been only mediocre, may also refrain from sending in an application because he supposes, again rightly in some cases, that he will be caught by the second screen. In other words, a college that operates on the



Weighing System

Screening System and lets prospective applicants know it—as it cannot help doing after it has been in business a while—may actually be frightening off many students it would like to have.

My impression is that many of the colleges that lean toward this system are likely to be the most fearful lest the Board examination requirement frighten away good prospects. In these circumstances their misgivings may be justified, for, after all, within the terms of the system, the test appears as one more screen to wriggle through—one more hazard in the formidable business of getting into college.

It is precisely at this point that the Weighing System can appear to best advantage. Instead of presenting each aspect of the admission process as a succession of barriers, it can present them as a collection of opportunities. If the candidate falls down in one respect, he may make up for it in another. In this situation, the test requirement, instead of looking like a threat, can be made to appear as an invitation to the student with a mediocre record to prove his worth and tip the scales in his favor.

The trouble is that those colleges which lean toward the Weighing System of admissions have not always been successful in conveying their

point of view to prospective applicants. Part of the difficulty is that they continue to publish detailed lists of unit requirements *even though they frequently waive them*. Or they speak of the necessity of being in the top quarter, or top third, or top half of the class even though the canny admissions officer will often reach into the cellar for a candidate with good scores and an appealing personality.

SELECTING THE WEIGHTS

The principal advantage of the Weighing System is that it guarantees one will get the best students from among the available applicants provided it is properly set up. Its chief disadvantage is that it is difficult to set up. One must go through a preliminary process the essentials of which consist of working out all of the possible combinations of evidence that add up to a passing college student. With large numbers, this working out of the combinations of evidence is partly accomplished by computing what is known in statistical parlance as the multiple regression equation. It is only partially achieved in this way, however, because principals' reports and interviewers' impressions do not lend themselves readily to statistical manipulation. With small numbers, on the other

hand, even this partial help from conventional statistical techniques is usually lacking. In this case, the admissions officer has to rely on his intuition. This will most often be right when he is in a position to know and be sensitive to the successes and failures of the individual students he himself has formerly admitted. Some admissions officers in small colleges accomplish this feat supremely well.

It is probably evident by this time that I personally favor the Weighing System over the Screening System. I think it is fairer to the candidate and better for the college. Furthermore, there is no question that it is the only system of admissions in which the value of the Board examinations has full effect. Under it the inclusion of the examinations tends to increase rather than decrease the flexibility of the admission process. When the question is raised, as it often is, whether one dares require the Achievement Tests as well as the SAT, the answer is obviously "Yes!" The more tests one puts into the system—if they are not tied too closely to unit requirements—the more flexible the system becomes, and the more attractive it can be made to the prospective applicant.

JIMMY PICKS HIS COLLEGE

Let me enlarge on this point a little by offering an illustration. Here is Jimmy Smith, a senior in a backwoods high school, who is trying to decide whether to apply to Screen College or to Weigh College. These colleges have the same reputation and Jimmy finds them equally attractive. The admission requirements in the catalog of Screen College, which naturally operates on the Screening System, are about as follows:

1. In the secondary school program a candidate should present sixteen units in academic subjects, of which four must be in English, three in a foreign language, two in history, two in algebra, one in plane geometry, and one in chemistry, biology, or physics.
2. Ordinarily, the candidate should have

grades of "B" or better in these subjects, and should rank in the top fifth of his class.

3. All candidates are also required to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test.
4. The principal of the candidate's school must file a report describing the applicant's character and promise. This report will carry great weight with the Committee in deciding whether the candidate is accepted.

Weigh College, which of course operates on the Weighing System, puts the matter thus:

1. The candidate should present evidence that he will have successfully completed four years of secondary school by the end of the current academic year. No particular curriculum is specified, but it is expected that the candidate will have acquired skill in English composition, a good knowledge of literature and history, some command of at least one foreign language, a reasonable facility with algebra and plane geometry, and an acquaintance with the principles and methods of one science, preferably chemistry, biology or physics. Good marks made in these subjects will count in the candidate's favor, but a few low marks will not necessarily bar him from admission.
2. Every candidate is expected to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test and three Achievement Tests. A good performance on these tests will constitute strong evidence in support of the candidate's application and may offset inadequate marks in school subjects. Similarly, high marks in school may offset a poor performance on the tests.
3. A report from the candidate's school principal is required and will be used in conjunction with all of the other evidence in deciding on the candidate's admission.

Jimmy has had only two years of French, only one year of algebra, and only one year of history. In English he got grades of "C" in the ninth and tenth grades, although since then

he has done better. He is twenty-fifth in a class of sixty students. Since he is lacking three of the prescribed units, was at one time deficient in English, and is not in the top fifth of his class, he decides that Screen College will not give his application a second glance. All things considered, he decides that his chances are better at Weigh College, submits his application there, and takes the Achievement Tests in English, Social Studies, and Chemistry. His scores are not brilliant; they turn out as follows:

SAT—Verbal	460
SAT—Mathematical	500
English	510
Social Studies	350
Chemistry	550

Weigh College accepts Jimmy because, taking all things together, he adds up to a passing student. His later performance in college justifies the decision. But what about that low score in Social Studies? Well, Jimmy had an "A" in the one history course he took. The authorities at Weigh College reasoned that although Jimmy didn't get much history in high school, what little he did get he probably learned well.

The point is this: Weigh College snared Jimmy Smith because it was more flexible than

Screen College in its admission requirements. Jimmy rejected himself from Screen College without even letting that institution know about it. He went down their Units Requirement chute on his own and there is no question in my mind that a lot of Jimmy's friends are taking the same slide while admissions officers at Screen College wonder why applicants are so hard to find. Weigh College on the other hand, could afford to be flexible in Jimmy's case because by using the Achievement Tests as well as the SAT, it was able to pile up enough evidence on the left-hand side of the balance to get a reliable measure of Jimmy's true worth.

These days one hears a good deal of criticism of the Achievement Tests, some of which is disturbing and some of it merely amusing. I don't doubt that the present tests have some serious weaknesses, nor do I doubt that, as of the present moment, they are the best tests we can get for the kind of admission system which is flexible enough to take care of the Jimmy Smiths who are scattered all over the country.

Whatever system of admissions one leans toward, there is still the question of how best to make use of a candidate's College Board scores after you have taken him in. In my travels among the colleges I found that few people seem to realize how useful the scores can be in the business of placement and guidance.

Before getting into this question—and space will not permit me to get into it very far—I think we ought to do a bit of wondering about why course placement and guidance in the freshman year have become matters of real concern. Fifty years ago, the colleges that made up the College Board drew a homogeneous group of students from a limited number of preparatory schools, all of which offered a series of courses approved in detail by the colleges and generally well-integrated with the courses the colleges themselves offered in the freshman year. The colleges were almost as much in control of the college preparatory curriculum as they were of their own curriculum, maybe more so. There was, in consequence, little break in the edu-



Henry S. Dyer supplied a comment, along with the batch of snapshots on which the drawing at the left was modelled. "The picture I prefer," he said, "is the one of me sawing wood. This proves that I have been known to exert myself." The quotation is more characteristic of him than the picture was. Anyone else might have assumed that a report on visits to twenty-five colleges would be regarded as clear

evidence of hard work. But Dr. Dyer did not think of it—or the trips—in those terms. He likes to prove things, as he has been demonstrating at Harvard for some time as director of the office of tests and in his seminars on problems in the measurement and prediction of achievement. He is also known to have exerted himself as assistant to the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, of which he is a member, and on the board of freshman advisers.

cational continuity between the twelfth and the thirteenth grades. Course placement was not a problem, since in English, foreign language, mathematics, history, and science, the student simply took up in college where he had left off in secondary school. I don't doubt that this is an exaggeration of the situation, but by and large—looking back on it—it was a pretty smooth system.

You know better than I do what has happened since then. The schools got the notion that they ought to pay some attention to the 80 per cent who did not go on to college, and the colleges got ideas about higher education for talented youth wherever found and whatever their previous condition of servitude. The continuity between high school and college was inevitably broken, and instead of drawing a homogeneous group of students from a few well-controlled schools, the colleges began to get a more and more heterogeneous but no less able group of students from schools that had never heard of the College Board. It is in this situation that the Weighing System of Admissions, which I have just described, makes so much sense, because it allows for heterogeneity in background and training. But by the same token, when the capable student gets into college these days, the college may have little idea of his *specific* capacities, and the student is apt to be pretty puzzled about what is expected of him in specific courses.

PLACING THE FRESHMAN

So we have the Problem of the Freshman Year. It is essentially a problem of adjustment, not emotional and social adjustment (those two have always been with us), but educational adjustment. What courses is the freshman ready to take? This is the placement question. How well is he expected to do? This is one kind of guidance question. And, what field is best for him? This is a second kind of guidance question. To shove off on the freshman himself the responsibility for finding his own answers is not altogether fair—especially when the college registrar

has in his locked file a fund of confidential information, such as the College Board scores, which the student paid for himself and which, if properly interpreted, might be of considerable help to him.

I do not mean to imply that the colleges I visited are not doing anything about the course placement of freshmen. All of them are keenly aware of the problem, and most of them are doing something about it. But there seems to be some puzzlement, both in how to gear the College Board scores into a placement testing program that is already in operation, and in how to make use of the scores in colleges where there is no placement testing system.*

PLACEMENT AND PREDICTION

This brings us, finally, to the question of how the Board scores can be used in the guidance of freshmen. As I have suggested above, educational guidance at this point consists of helping the student decide how much and what to study. A number of colleges now work out some sort of prediction index in connection with their admission procedures. This prediction index, which is usually a weighted combination of the College Board scores and the class rank in high school, can be of considerable value to the dean or the freshman adviser in deciding, right at the start, how heavy a course load the freshman ought to carry. It can also tell the adviser, along about the middle of the year, whether the freshman is working up to expectation.

If he isn't, one of two things can be wrong: either the prediction index, for one reason or another, misrepresents the student's ability, or the student may be in some sort of unforeseen difficulties. He may have taken on some courses for which he is not fitted, he may have fallen in

* Dr. Dyer offers practical solutions of the "puzzlement" in a paper entitled *The Use of Admission Scores in Course Placement* which was distributed at the April 2 Board meeting. Copies are available at the Board's office, 425 West 117 St., N.Y. 27, and will be supplied on request.

love, he may be dating too much, he may be having a row with his family, or he may be in difficulties with his roommates. A discrepancy between the prediction index and the student's grades cannot tell you what the trouble is, but it can at least suggest the need for a quiet investigation. In fact, it is so useful in this connection that, even if not worked out as part of the admission procedure, it is well worth computing for every freshman after he has been admitted.

HOW MUCH WORK IS INVOLVED?

I suppose some people are wondering why it is necessary to go to all the bother of computing a prediction index when the SAT scores can serve the same purpose. The answer is that the SAT scores alone cannot serve the purpose half as well. They get at only two facets of the student's probable achievement, and for that reason they may be misleading. At any rate, when they are appropriately combined with the Achievement Test scores and the high school rank-in-class, or some other measure of high school performance, the resultant index is ordinarily more than twice as accurate as the SAT scores alone in indicating how well a student ought to perform in college.

We do not have the space, nor is this the occasion to explain the formula for computing a prediction index, but if you will take the problem to your own Department of Mathematics or Psychology and provide them with the necessary data, they ought to be able to work it out for you. One graduate student, reasonably competent in statistics, can probably do the job by hand methods in a few weeks. The steps can be found in any good textbook on educational statistics.

How can you make use of the test scores in helping a student decide what field is the best for him? Admittedly, in many colleges this question is largely irrelevant, for so much of the work of the first two years is prescribed and gives such broad coverage in all the major fields of learning that by the time the student reaches

the point of decision, he may be in a good position to know from first-hand experience what field he wants. However, even if the freshman program allows a student just one elective, the choice of that one may be crucial. Should he take the chemistry course that is prerequisite to further work in chemistry? Or the biology course that is necessary if he is to go on with a pre-medical program? Or a fine arts course that will give him his only chance to explore the field as a possible major? Should he begin the study of a new language with the idea of going into comparative literature, or possibly even linguistics? These questions can wait until they answer themselves, but I cannot help but feel that to neglect them is to run the risk of having the student end up, more or less by default, in a field for which he has no particular competence or interest. He will get through, he will get his degree, and some day he may be a valuable member of his community, but the opportunity for a really exciting intellectual experience that can come only once in a lifetime may be lost.

A RICH REWARD

The Board scores alone cannot solve the riddle, but if one studies them prayerfully in the light of the student's past record, they will often suggest possibilities of which the student himself has not even thought. This is particularly true if one has Achievement as well as Aptitude scores for the student. They will not help him find his occupational goal, except perhaps indirectly, but they can help by uncovering the area of learning in which he has habitually shown the most competence.

Guidance is a word that is too often associated only with vocational advice. This, I believe, is unfortunate, for the kind of guidance the ordinary freshman most needs—especially if he is in a liberal arts college—is what I prefer to call intellectual guidance, a process that will help him realize the kinds of mental tasks he can do best, so that he can seek them out and know what it means to enjoy the life of the mind.

Admission in a Women's College

Will it be a trailer camp or an empty dormitory this year? The question is which candidates and how many to accept—by **HARRIET NEWHALL**

When some of my friends ask, "How many new students are you going to accept this year?" and I reply, "I wish I knew," they act as if they thought I had lost my mind. If I go on to say, "Well, we shall probably aim for a class of between 275 and 300, but of course we shall have to accept nearly twice that number," they gasp. "What's the matter? Isn't Mount Holyoke popular any more? Or what?"

It is the "Or what?" factor that interests admissions officers.

The whole business of getting into college has changed greatly during my years in the admissions office. In some ways, it is more complicated and in some, less so. When I began work as director of admissions, the majority of the applicants really wanted to come to Mount Holyoke. Many did not think of registering elsewhere and it was safe to expect that about eighty-five or ninety per cent of those who were accepted would come. It was quite simple to estimate how far to over-accept in order to have the desired number of new students for the places available.

Since then, new admissions plans have been added and some discarded. In one year there were six different plans of entrance and various combinations of them all, as well as one or two special projects in which the college cooperated, among them the Thirty School Plan of the Progressive Education Association. Now there is only one plan, the candidate being required to take the College Board Scholastic Aptitude and Achievement Tests in the final year of prepa-

ration in addition to presenting strong school records and recommendations.

Although there has been this definite simplification in examination techniques, the keenness of the competition for admission has made the actual selection of the entering class far more difficult. More and more attention is being given to the candidate as an individual.

FROM A TO Z

Her school records and recommendations are studied more carefully than ever and are more often discussed with her principal or guidance officer. Her College Board scores are interpreted in the light of all the other information available and are not in themselves the deciding factor. Her health records are thoroughly checked by the college physicians and there is a follow-up whenever there seems to be an indication of a health problem—physical, emotional, or whatever. The reports of the personal interview are shared with the entire admissions committee and the letter from the candidate describing her own special interests and extracurricular activities, as well as her reasons for wanting a college education, is read and discussed.

The complete credentials for each candidate are studied in relation to those for the other candidates. No single thing in itself determines acceptance or rejection of the candidate, but it is the record as a whole on which the committee makes its decision, trying to select the girls who seem best qualified from every point of view for what Mount Holyoke has to offer them.

My work as director of admissions is primarily concerned with applicants for the freshman class, although each year twenty-five or thirty students are admitted with advanced standing on transfer from other colleges or universities. Special committees consider and act upon the applications from the foreign students and for admission to our graduate school. Entrance to the freshman class at Mount Holyoke is directed by a board of admission, a committee consisting of eight members—the academic dean, as chairman, the president of the college, the registrar, the director of admissions, and four members of the teaching faculty, at least three of whom represent a department in which entrance work is required, e.g. English, a foreign language, mathematics, or science.

At Mount Holyoke this group meets about once a month to discuss admissions policies and procedures and to act upon special requests. In the spring, after the College Board scores have come and credentials are, in general, complete, it is in more or less continuous session for about two weeks to select the freshman class. Three other members of the faculty sit in at these meetings, all of whom are helped in their work



the class together? Mount Holyoke alumnae do, and for good reasons, as Harriet Newhall's article shows. She received the alumnae medal in 1950 for the "leadership, wisdom and judgment" with which she has served the student body and graduates of her college. An alumna of Mount Holyoke, Miss Newhall was assistant to the president before being named executive secretary and then director of the board of admissions. She holds degrees from Simmons and Columbia and is a member of several professional organizations.

Certain college officials seem to be more fondly remembered than others by former students, and teachers always have an edge on administrators when classmates meet to reminisce. Good, old Professor Spindletop's mannerisms are never forgotten, although his course in economics may now seem as quaint as the 1925 income tax. But who remembers the director of admissions whose scrupulous hands brought

by the discussion—the dean of residence, one of whose duties is to assign rooms, the executive secretary of the committee on scholarships, and one of the college physicians.

This is indeed a hard-working committee. It feels not only an obligation to the college in its selection of the entering class but also to the candidate who has filed her application with the expectation that her credentials will receive serious study and consideration. The committee recognizes this obligation, often even to the extent of assisting the rejected applicant to find a place elsewhere. Each member is given mimeographed copies of much of the information received. The material relating to the applicants, listed in alphabetical order, makes quite a sizable volume. This becomes our constant companion both night and day throughout the entire session.

MAKING UP EIGHT MINDS

First of all, the credentials for each applicant are considered individually from the alphabetical list and tentative actions are taken. Next, they are studied in school groups in an endeavor to be fair to all in each group. Then, once more the whole list is reviewed, final actions are taken, a waiting list is set up, and suggestions are made of possible procedures for some of the rejected candidates. To many of these the director sends special letters, trying to be of help as well as attempting, perhaps in vain, to soften the blow. This all sounds simple but getting eight members of a college faculty to agree is not always accomplished in a few minutes. Last year the meetings went on for about seventy hours.

Every bit of information available about each candidate is used, excellence in one part of a record often seeming to offset weakness elsewhere. Experience has proved that it is no kindness to admit a girl if, in the best judgment of the committee, her preparation seems not adequate. We endeavor to decide whether she will be ready for the high standard of work she will meet at Mount Holyoke and be able to



There seem to be so many applicants . . .

profit by its offerings. We want to know, too, if it seems likely that she will adjust herself satisfactorily to the many and varied demands of college life and at the same time contribute something of value to the life and work on the campus.

Perhaps it is not necessary to add that never yet has an entire entering class been composed of such paragons. Naturally we do not want to keep girls out of college, although applicants coming for interviews often act as if they thought we did. We really do want to have a freshman class which represents different types of schools and backgrounds and a wide geographical distribution. We also like to have a full college.

HOW MANY TO OVER-ACCEPT?

A complicating factor in fullness, of course, is that in addition to the fact that the majority of candidates do register in more than one college, some still applying to as many as six or seven, they often give no hint as to which college is the most desired. Trying to determine how many to over-accept is a headache. If forty or fifty too many decide to come, where will they live? Mount Holyoke is a residential college and all students must live in the college residence halls. In the village of South Hadley there would be no possibility of finding places for them. The

admissions committee is never popular with the dean of residence when even moderate overcrowding is necessary. If by some mischance there should be forty or fifty empty rooms, you can imagine what that would do to the budget and how popular the committee would be with the president or treasurer.

It was especially helpful to the committees in the residential colleges for women when candidates indicated their college choices and these were reported by the College Board. Even though a choice might not be final or might have changed after the application was sent to the College Board, it was possible to estimate fairly accurately how far to over-accept in order to have a full college. That was the only way in which Mount Holyoke made use of the candidate's indication of choice. It did not enter into the decision on her acceptance or rejection.

WASTED ENERGY

Another problem which has arisen during these last years, adding greatly to our difficulties, is that there *seem* to be so many applicants wanting to come to these eastern women's colleges. It is a fact that each college does have a long list of applicants to consider. The catch is that many hours are spent by the admissions officers in the different colleges interviewing and studying the credentials of the *same* persons. The figures are most misleading and as yet we have not discovered how to avoid it. It means that a tremendous amount of time and energy is being wasted by schools, admissions officers, and candidates. Many of us believe that most applicants know the particular college they want but, because of the keen competition, do not dare risk everything on one application. The colleges themselves often do not dare urge them to take that chance. How can this duplication of work, this waste of time and energy, be avoided?

More and more the high school juniors and seniors go on college tours, postponing until the senior year in high school the actual filing of an application. These tours are of value to

both the candidate and the admissions officer. The candidate is usually more intelligent in choosing the college to which she finally applies, and certainly the director of admissions learns a great deal from talking with girls and parents from all over the country and widely varying types of schools. I say the candidate is *usually* more intelligent. Not long ago when a prospective freshman and her father were in my office, by way of getting started I asked what other colleges she had already visited and she named several, including Amherst and Williams. I said, "Did you not go to Smith?" She looked a bit vague, then turned to her father. "Daddy, did we see Smith?"

Often these happy "tourists" come into the Mount Holyoke office breathless and eager, saying "I'm sorry to be late, but we got lost coming over from Smith" (no doubt they went by way of Amherst). Or, "We have only a few minutes for Mount Holyoke. We want to have at least an hour at Smith and then we are going down to Radcliffe and Wellesley and we also



plan to take in Wheaton, Pembroke, and Connecticut this weekend." And I assure you they will get to each college, smiling, cheerful, full of vigor, with or without an appointment, perhaps even turning up at seven o'clock on a Sunday evening at one's home just the night the admissions officer has a few friends in for a quiet supper.

They are undaunted and indefatigable, and they are seriously trying to decide for themselves which college is to be theirs. They ask more intelligent questions than they used to and more of them actually seem to want to know about the curriculum and to take the social life for granted. They have ideas about what they will do after college, and they seem aware of what is going on in the world and want to take their



Third generation

place in it. Perhaps the youth movements and the radio and even television are responsible for this training in awareness.

Last year, in trying to decide how many candidates to accept, our committee felt quite lost because there was so little indication of the choice of college. However, on the basis of percentages of acceptances and rejections over a period of years, the committee gambled on getting about fifty-five per cent of those accepted and came out with a few more than the dean of residence expected. Even after all these years of admissions work, I have to admit that the morning after acceptance letters have been mailed to nearly twice the number of persons we could possibly house, I still have a moment of panic or fright. Our fate thereafter is to watch the mails, one day with the hope that there will be a large number of withdrawals, the next wondering if there will be a full college, and every day with the thought that this may be the year when we shall have to set up a trailer camp—or close a residence hall. Whether or not an indication of choice did encourage dishonesty among pupils, it is certain that the present arrangement makes a gambler of the admissions officer.

THE PERENNIAL PROBLEMS

There are many problems which vary little from year to year but which take their toll in wear and tear—the irate parent who will always believe that his only child, the apple of his eye,

could have done the work at any one of the four colleges by which she was refused; the daughter of an alumna whose grandmother and great-grandmother, too, were alumnae, who had taken Mount Holyoke for granted in spite of almost 100 per cent concentration on extra-curricular activities; the tired and harassed school principal pursued by the chairman of the school committee whose daughter was not admitted. There is the girl with no money at all who has the earmarks of genius. Is it fair to urge her to go to a state university near her home? I could go on indefinitely citing examples familiar to us all.

A LONG, LONG TRAIL

There are compensations, too, many of them. Strenuous and demanding as school visiting trips may be, the admissions officer is sure of a cordial welcome and royal entertainment, in addition to careful arrangements for her interviews with the registered applicants. Enough cannot be said for the alumnae who give most generously of their time and energy, chauffeuring the director from school to school in the family car while the long suffering husband, without an audible murmur, walks many extra blocks so that she need scarcely put foot to the ground. It is a satisfaction, too, to follow the candidates along through their college years, and to realize that this time-consuming, careful selection of the class seems to have resulted in fewer failures, either academic or social, than in former years.

I believe that the trends in our admissions procedures are progressive and constructive. The committees are ready to experiment and to cooperate, to make exceptions and to try to help the girl find the place that is best for her. At least minimum entrance requirements still seem to be desirable, requirements that will provide the foundation necessary for the work in a liberal arts college and yet be flexible enough to allow the candidate time for electives. The committee also attempts to care for the unusual student, the genius in one field, the so-called "late bloomer," the girl who seems to

Stuff and nonsense

Albert I. Dickerson, admissions director at Dartmouth whose fondness for dogs is mentioned by Eugene S. Wilson in the article which begins on the next page, believes that Mr. Wilson's good points also deserve recognition:

"Too many of us construe our functions in a narrow and selfish way," he wrote to the Board. "How many study the catalogues of other colleges so that we may help every candidate fit himself to that particular college which is best for him? I hesitate to use the word 'inspiring,' but Mr. Wilson's leadership in exercising this higher responsibility of the admissions office has at least been deeply impressive to me and, I am sure, to others, including Mr. Copeland of Williams and Mr. Eldredge of Wesleyan.

"We have observed that these referred candidates seldom seem to weigh more than 125 pounds, but they are nevertheless very interesting young men, and they often quote very generous testimonials from Mr. Wilson. One, for example, whose SAT scores resemble those of a hard-fought basketball game between Yale and Princeton and whose eyes show a fitful tendency to cross in moments of abstraction, will say, 'Mr. Wilson told me Dartmouth has marvelous facilities for chess.'

"On the theory, no doubt, that spring comes very tardily to New Hampshire, Mr. Wilson has been most generous in sharing with us Amherst's noted specialty, which they first identified and have so freely propagated, the Late Bloomer."

give promise although her preparatory work has been most irregular, or the girl with a physical handicap, such as blindness, or who has been crippled by polio. To sum up, we try to consider the applicant as an individual, a human being, and a whole person. We seem to have a larger number of applicants for entrance next September than in any year since 1947, our peak year. How many will actually come remains to be seen. Will the liberal arts colleges for women continue to hold their own, or shall we discover that Benjamin Fine's prediction in *The New York Times* is true and that there will be a decrease in our enrollment in September? I wish I knew.

"Character and stuff," says the author, should be the title of this essay on admissions antics—by EUGENE S. WILSON

Admission in a Men's College

The most famous heel in the history of the world was not an admissions officer, in contradiction to the claims of many coaches, alumni, school heads, and guidance officers. This renowned heel belonged to a great warrior who bore the name Achilles. Achilles would not have had a weak heel if his mother had dunked him completely in the river Styx. Admissions officers act at times as if they were completely dunked, as if they had no weaknesses, no vulnerable areas. They are proud of their objectivity and even boast of the impartial scrutiny they give each applicant. But they do have tender spots and the school leaders know it.

For example, it is common knowledge that an average lad who seeks admission to Harvard can enhance his chances if, on entering the admissions office, he will greet Mr. Gummere with the Latin salutation, *Salve!*, if he will talk of the glories that once were Greece, and if on departure he says, "I must not overstay my welcome, Mr. Gummere, *tempus fugit*."

Mr. Noyes, at Yale, will give considerable time to an applicant who reveals an urge to major in English and who can discuss in some detail the writings of Tobias George Smollett.

Mr. Dickerson, at Dartmouth, in his search for the all-around-man, the scholar and the athlete, has been known to come to his office on Sunday to see a boy who has written about his summer on a Navajo Indian reservation, or who asks permission to bring his dog to the interview.

Similarly, at Amherst not long ago we unsuspectingly exposed one of our weaknesses. Mr.

Cole, our president, in his talk to the College Board a year ago revealed that Amherst was searching for "late bloomers." The press found this a snappy phrase and gave the story a good play.

Do you think school heads and guidance officers missed that little item? About twenty-five per cent of our applicants last year, many of them with mediocre academic records and an unimpressive list of activities were carefully labelled "late bloomers." There was nothing else exciting you could say about these applicants. To support our president the admission committee took a few of the more promising of this classification. I have watched them carefully. Not only have they shown no signs of blooming, there is not a bud on any stalk as yet. I am beginning to suspect we were sold some century plants instead of late bloomers.

THE JONES BOYS

Personality, school reports (principals' reports), and character are factors considered to be very important in the assessment process, if the statements of colleges are to be believed.

Personality is a tricky word. It means what its user wants it to mean. It is not an accurate word in communication and even psychologists cannot agree on a working definition. When an alumnus writes a letter saying John Jones has a good personality it usually means the alumnus likes John Jones, or that the alumnus works for John Jones' father. It may mean that John Jones has a personality like the alumnus who

has written. If you know the personality of the alumnus, you may get some idea about the personality of John Jones, but not enough of an idea to help you predict accurately. I suspect that the admissions committees (I won't put all the blame on the admissions officers) make their most serious errors, both of rejection and of acceptance, on the basis of the personality factor.

Admissions officers and alumni interviewers are usually extroverts. They like to meet people. They would be in other work, or in another world, if this were not so. They are usually impressed with a boy who is all extrovert, the boy who appears well adjusted and adaptable and who has poise, an appearance of maturity, and a record of leadership. Though I have no statistics to present, no studies to offer to prove my next statement, I have seen enough evidence to convince me that the ranks of the "early faders" are filled with these lads, especially when they present average academic records.

On the other hand, some of the leaders in college and in post college life are those who possess high aptitude and academic achievement, but no record of leadership in secondary school or college. These students are often neutral in personality in their adolescent years, or they may even be labelled "grinds." They are real "late bloomers," or as Mr. Benedict at Andover labels them, "retarded burgeoners," in that college helped them to learn about social adjustment and they had the capacity and the desire to learn.

There is a place in college for the definitely



Reluctant burgeon



*We do take some "normal" boys at Amherst
... so the eccentrics won't feel normal!*

neurotic or even queer personality. If all neurotic personalities died tomorrow, our nation would lose some of its great teachers, artists, political figures, and even college presidents, but no admissions officers would expire. There are occupations where the gifted, but neurotic personality can flourish. We should look twice before we refuse admittance to the "unusual character." Now I shall await the flood of mail that will come from every school that has a brilliant but definitely queer lad to place in college. I expect our experience with "late bloomers" will be repeated. But I would remind those of you who are in schools—and you might pass this on to your friends—that we do take some "normal" boys at Amherst, and we do this so the eccentrics won't feel normal.

THE AWFUL TRUTH

Last fall at the Educational Records Bureau meeting, I went on record as favoring two reports from schools, one before the boy is admitted and one to be sent in after acceptance. This latter report will give a true picture of the boy and his problems. Most principals' reports are optimistic. They show the boy at his best, and they offer real promise for him. And why should they not do so? The principal wants the boy to get into the college of his choice. Parents are pressing the principal. I don't blame principals for writing the kind of reports they write on their students. I suspect that college guidance officers do exactly the same thing when they write to graduate schools or business firms about their graduates.

Now, these optimistic appraisals of youth are

biased because the writer thinks the boy is going to grow and develop and that in a new environment he will flourish even better than in the old. They know that he has powers which have not yet emerged and they are hopeful that these will appear. They recognize the fact that an individual can and does change. Everything is in the favor of the boy who is going to get a fresh start. When principals get those familiar check or rating lists to fill in on personality or character, they almost always mark one or two notches above that which might be labeled accurate. What principal is going to say a boy is "usually honest" when he can say that he is "always honest"? The principal knows that if he checks the column "usually honest" the admissions officer will say, "Ha, ha, there are times when he isn't honest. We won't take him."

These rating forms are almost useless, in my opinion, for two reasons: (1) The key descriptive words are so relative and subjective that accurate communication is difficult, if not impossible, (2) the picture the admissions officer gets is a static, fragmentary one—and there is no way to unite these fragments into a living, acting individual.

When principals do tell the truth they are sometimes hurt by careless admissions officers who fail to keep the information confidential. I had a discouraging experience a short while ago when I wrote to a school about a boy whom I had tried to teach during the war. I said, "I think this lad is headed toward the wrong occupation. He will be a dull and uninspiring teacher. Don't take him." A week later the boy was in my office and he said, as he sat down across the desk from me, "What makes you think that I will be a dull and uninspiring teacher?"

OPTIMISM COMES EASILY

Admissions officers can acquire a better understanding of the position of the principal by writing, every so often, a letter of recommendation to a graduate school or business firm for a senior. Only after an admissions officer has gone through this process several times will he

understand why the schools write, usually more optimistically than they should, why it is natural to do so, and why it is safer to do so. We understand why school officers write as they do about students and we hope they understand why we occasionally don't take their reports too seriously and do turn boys down.

I cannot close this section of my paper without acknowledging the fact that there are a very few school officials who write thorough and objective reports on their students. These reports confess the personal idiosyncrasies of the applicant, explain them and urge acceptance in spite of them. This kind of reporting will increase if admissions officers guard the confidential nature of the reports and if they give greater weight to reports which are honest and complete.

WHAT IS "CHARACTER"?

The word "character" is being employed less and less frequently by psychologists. It is not even listed in many of the indexes of the latest books on adjustment, selection, and assessment. But it is still used in our catalogues and statements of qualities we seek in our applicants. So I shall discuss character as a separate segment of personality, though I believe it to be part of the whole personality. By character I mean a cluster of moral traits, i.e. honesty, loyalty, moral courage, and responsibility. Moral character is revealed by behavior. The behavior of the adolescent that is reported to colleges is the behavior that is witnessed by reporting authorities, i.e. parents, teachers, and principals, or that the reporter wants the college to know about. Adolescents, like adults, know when it is wise to show good character. The classmates of an applicant can give the most accurate report on the real character of an individual—but try to get them to talk.

True character begins to emerge under freedom, such freedom as college offers. In this freedom strong temptations are encountered for the first time. Imitative character slowly gives way to a new character that grows out of reflective thought and often only after a disturbing (to



Sawbuck Apperception Test, Advanced Series C

parents and administrators) period of trial and error. For two years I looked up the character references of all our leading student rascals, and their references were as beautiful as their former character. These rascals were all good boys, loaded with boyhood honors and recommendations.

Were these errant souls destined to bear the label "character bad" for life? Not at all. Some of our best alumni, men of honor and character, were once dismissed from Amherst for crimes that were labeled "lack of character." The behavior of a man in church and on a convention may be very different. The words and actions of an adolescent at home on vacation may be very unlike those of the same lad at a fraternity dance at a college other than his own. Behavior at home and behavior abroad are sometimes totally different.

To solve the difficult problem of teen-age character assessment, we at Amherst have perfected after much experiment a character test

which I dare reveal to my competitors only because special equipment and training are required. I feel safe in exposing this secret, also, because our lead in this field should enable us to keep one jump ahead of even the fastest moving competitor.

THE SAWBUCK TEST

This test is called the "Sawbuck (or Ten Dollar Bill) Apperception Test, Advanced Series C. The equipment for the test consists of a special anteroom off the admissions office. In this anteroom are six chairs and a table. Bolted to the table is a Heart Fund contribution box. The table is placed against the wall opposite the entrance door. On the table are three books and these books are "French Art Studies, Male," "French Art Studies, Female," and "The Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius." In the corner under one chair, but in plain sight, is a slightly crumpled sawbuck. On the wall between the admission office and the testing room is an oil por-

trait of a man, life-size. One eye in this picture is removable and can be replaced by a human eye, or an inhuman eye, if you wish—the eye of the admissions officer.

This is a multiple-choice type of situational test and since there is only one correct answer, the difficulty in subjectivity of scoring which renders useless so many other forms of testing is avoided. In this test each multiple-choice action is independent so the problem of finding the number of parallel relationships, which frequently cause difficulty in the matching form of test, is excluded. Furthermore, the test situation is so simple and the variety of responses so limited that accurate evaluation is possible.

I shall try to keep this report from getting too technical.

Let us watch a prospect and his mother and father enter the test chamber. Remember we are testing and observing only one thing: the true character of the applicant. Remember, too, that the great strength of this test is the fact that the three individuals under observation do not know they are under observation. Each person is free to be himself or herself. No one is playing a role. Our eye is in place.

Test situation 1: How do the characters enter?

If the father enters first, this is a typical father-domination situation and is apt to reveal a son who is repressed or neurotic. Don't take the boy if this situation develops as indicated.

If the mother enters the room first there is no character revelation possible. It is obvious that the boy has learned from long experience that if he goes in front of his mother he gets disciplined. Pay no attention to the boy's character as revealed in this example.

If the son bursts into the room first, mark it well. Some inexperienced psychologists who have not earned their doctorate will claim that this behavior indicates a rude and selfish individual. Experience has taught us, however, that such action really reveals an intense power of concentration, a natural leadership and drive or aggressiveness. These are the qualities we all

seek. Most important of all, perhaps, is the fact that such eager action betrays a "this college is my first choice" attitude. The coefficient of correlation on this item alone is astonishingly high, about + .98.

Successful interpretation of character through action depends on the skill and experience of the reporter and his relationship to the observed. This must be kept in mind when using this situational test.

Test situation 2: Who reads what?

Now, if the boy goes to the table with the literature on it and picks up the book marked "French Art Studies, Female," this is a dangerous sign for boys coming to Amherst because it reveals a playboy, girl-chasing tendency. If we weren't so near Mount Holyoke and Smith, if we were way back in the woods away from young women, like Williams College, we could probably ignore this indication.

If the boy picks up the book, "French Art Studies, Male," he should be rejected without an interview.

If the boy picks up the book, "The Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius," he should be given credit for great intellectual curiosity and complete dedication to learning. It is obvious that he will not be distracted by anything from the pursuit of learning.

There is just one other item I might mention here. If the father goes to the table first and



If Eugene S. Wilson was ever among the "rascal undergraduates" he mentions in this article, which seems doubtful, his post-graduate record (post '29) must have more than made up for any early rascality. He is associate dean and director of admissions at Amherst and has participated in many of the college's most respectable good works, as secretary of the alumni society, secretary of the college corporation, editor of the *Amherst Graduates Quarterly*, president of the college's boys club, and—to top it off—president of the Amherst Rotary Club. On the other hand, he *did* invent the Sawbuck Apperception Test and, after all, it is designed to bring out the worst in a boy.

picks up the Marcus Aurelius, it is a sign that the group knows it is being watched and the test should be ended.

Test situation 3: Discovery of the sawbuck.

If the boy sees the sawbuck and picks it up and puts it in his pocket without saying anything to anybody, this is a very good sign in spite of what some psychologists believe. We have found that it denotes that the boy has power of observation and is able to act quickly and quietly. It shows determination. It may indicate that the boy has a great future ahead of him in government or politics.

If the boy finds the sawbuck and gives it to his father, this means that the boy has weak character, that he is too obedient to force and too subservient to power. He will never make a good citizen in a democracy.

If the boy returns the bill to the secretary outside the door, it is a very good sign, if you are sure the boy does not suspect that he is being watched. If he knows he is watched, the boy will do this every time. This is the way boys get a reputation for good character.

If the boy takes the sawbuck and puts it in the Heart Fund donation box, this is a positive act, one that bodes well for your alumni fund. Boys who have this generous nature may exhibit it in the future when they become men. If they have a chance to earn any money, you know they will want to give some of it back to the college.

Well, that's the test and some of the reports on it. We have used this test for three years now, and I can say quite candidly that because of it we have been able to accept some fine lads who were rejected by our competitors because of lack of character. And we have also, by means of this same test, been able to pass on to some of our competitors some very unusual characters.

Unless colleges can develop and use some tests like this, I suggest they take lightly the reports on the character of an adolescent. The true character of an adolescent boy or girl is unknown. It is all too often of the hot house variety, untested by the winds of adversity, the

rains of temptation, and the turbulence of freedom. Not only is the character of the student unknown but the exact nature of the campus forces which will influence character development remain a mystery to most admissions officers and faculty.

A college should be interested, tremendously so, in what happens to the character of its students. All too often college administrators and test experts measure the success of their admission programs in terms of academic achievement. Too little is known about the attitudes and personal qualities of their undergraduates. But this is another problem, a problem we do not have to discuss here.

Perhaps I should clarify one point at this time—namely, that I do think personality and character have something to do with academic success in college. There is no doubt about this. But having said this, I repeat the assertions I have made in this paper—that no one yet knows enough about personality or character or how to assess them to predict successfully the future of an adolescent and those who do not use these factors in any controlling way will be wrong as often as they are right.

THE FIVE ESSENTIALS

What factors are significant in the assessment process? Just five:

1. The ability to do the academic work at a particular institution.
2. The industriousness of the applicant. Call this drive, determination, or motivation, if you wish.
3. Intellectual curiosity. Only the curious really learn.
4. Imagination.
5. X factor. This is the most important factor of all for colleges which have a competitive admission situation. Factor X is the priceless ingredient, the cement which holds the other factors together. Factor X is—and I should dive for the nearest exit when I say it—is personality.

What is the "influence"

of Tests and Entrance Requirements?

by WILLIAM C. FELS

American schools and colleges are operating today in an unprecedented atmosphere of charges and counter-charges. The public schools say their role is the education of all American youth and that the admissions requirements of colleges hold them in a strait jacket of tradition which the eight-year study of thirty schools proved purposeless. And the colleges reply that the schools in their zeal for the average neglect the able, forsake the ancient academic values, and unload the responsibility for college preparation upon the colleges at a time when they are philosophically and financially not disposed to accept this added burden.

Implicit in this debate is the assumption that college entrance examinations do exert a strong

influence—some would say a dominant influence—upon secondary school courses of study, and that this influence is bad. My researches have led me to believe that in so far as tests are concerned, this is largely folklore although, as is likely to be the case with folklore, there is more than a grain of truth in it.

SCHOOLS SURVEYED

Recently the College Board conducted a survey of the influence of its tests. A representative sample of public and independent school administrators and teachers was polled on such questions as the influence of tests on:

- Selection of topics in courses
- Order of topics in courses
- Time devoted to topics
- Selection of courses in curriculum
- Methods of teaching
- Teachers' development
- Attitude of pupil.

The consensus was that tests do influence secondary school studies but that the influence is neither appreciable nor bad.

An analysis of the returns from those respondents who thought the influence of tests was more than slight, that is, that it was either appreciable, strong, or dominant, produced the apparently contradictory result that in every specific instance except one the largest group thought the influence was neutral, if there can be a neutral influence, or in other words, that it was neither good nor bad. This exception was



The tools of testing are so little known outside the profession that they can be disconcerting to the uninitiated. "If test people aren't born talking about correlations and percentiles," an innocent once asked William C. Fels, "how on earth do they get that way? Where do they come from?" The Secretary of the Board answered that many of the people now working with tests are renegade English teachers. He is true

to type in that respect, having been an English instructor in the Humanities Department at Cooper Union when the Army called with assignments in officer training, public relations, and the teaching of illiterates. After the war he returned to Columbia, his alma mater, and served as a veterans counselor for a time before joining the university's office of development. From there it was but a short step—across Amsterdam Avenue—to the Board's office.

the influence of tests on the attitude of the pupil, which it was agreed was either good or bad, but certainly was not neutral. The apparent contradiction was due to the fact that while 60% of public and 80% of independent school people thought the tests did exert some kind of influence, they differed widely as to the nature of the influence.

A remarkably small proportion of those who thought the tests were influential thought the influence was bad. In only seven instances did more than 10% of the respondents who thought the present Board tests were influential think they were an appreciably bad influence:

Order of topics in course	
independent school headmasters	11%
Time devoted to topics	
independent school headmasters	13%
independent school teachers	15%
Selection of courses in curriculum	
public school principals	11%
Methods of teaching	
independent school teachers	14%
Attitude of pupil	
independent school headmasters	12%
independent school teachers	17%

In only four of these cases was the group which thought the influence was bad larger than the group which thought it good. All of these cases were in the independent schools:

Order of topics in course	
independent school headmasters	11%
Time devoted to topics	
independent school headmasters	13%
independent school teachers	15%
Methods of teaching	
independent school teachers	14%

However, even here the largest percentage which thought the influence bad was 15%.

I think we can draw some interesting conclusions from this analysis. There seems to be general, if not complete, satisfaction with the influence of the present testing program. The only sizable area of dissatisfaction in the public

schools is the influence of tests on the selection of courses on the curriculum, but even here only 8% of public school administrators expressed dissatisfaction. The area of dissatisfaction in the independent schools seems to center around the problems created by the March testing date and on the type of preparation which independent schools feel objective tests force them into. But only 15% of the headmasters were unhappy.

The survey also inquired into the support for essay testing. While it is perhaps not surprising that only 16% of public school people favored more essay testing, it is surprising that the percentage of independent school people who favored this is only about 40%. However, there is undoubtedly a sizable minority opinion in the independent schools in favor of a return to essay testing. This certainly stems from dissatisfaction with the influence of objective tests upon methods of teaching. Perhaps it is an expression of dissatisfaction with the *lack* of influence of the present tests on the content of the curriculum, particularly in English.

Our survey did not cover the influence of college entrance requirements other than tests. Perhaps if such a survey were made, it would reveal a satisfaction with the influence of college subject-matter requirements which would belie the clamor against them, but other evidence suggests that it would not.

THE PREPARATORY PATTERN

An analysis of the recently published *Offerings and Enrollments in High School Subjects 1948-49*, Chapter 5, of the Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, provides much food for thought. It is clear that in the year 1949, despite all protestations from admissions officers to the contrary, the pattern of college preparation was still the dominant pattern in the public schools. The average high school program consisted of about

- 4 parts traditional English sequence
- 3 parts Social Studies
- 2 parts Science
- 2 parts Mathematics

1 part Language
4 parts other subjects

The inroads, as some would call them, of the non-traditional subjects have not been in proportion to the anxiety about them.

In English the traditional sequence enrolls 93% of the students. Of the non-traditional courses, only Journalism enrolls more than one-tenth of one per cent—Journalism enrolls 1.9%—and all non-traditional English courses together enrolled only 2.7% in 1949.

In social studies, American History enrolls 91% of the students during one of their four years. The only non-college-preparatory course which enrolled an appreciable number was Consumers Education, and that only seven-tenths of one per cent in 1949.

In the sciences, General Science in the first year, and Biology, Chemistry, and Physics in the last three years are the principal offerings. No other science enrolled more than 1%.

In mathematics, General Mathematics for non-college-preparatory students had an appreciable enrollment, 13.1%, but the normal sequence was still Algebra, Plane Geometry, Intermediate Algebra, Trigonometry, and Solid Geometry.

Over 20% of the students were enrolled in a modern or classical language. Less than five hundredths of one per cent were enrolled in General Foreign Language.

I do not know whether this adherence to traditional subject matter can be justly laid to the influence of college entrance requirements, but the survival of this marked pattern in the face of major changes in the secondary school population argues strongly that it can.

However, the major influence on secondary school enrollments in various subjects is not college entrance requirements, but pressures set up by changes in the society and the economy.

It is easy not to hear the music of the spheres and it is easy, too, not to hear the expression of cultural change. For example, one hears a constant complaint about the quality of instruction in English and about the inability of entering

college students to write well. This is thought by many, if not by most, to be because the quality of English teaching has deteriorated. I submit that it may not be this at all, but the expression of the need of a paper-work society for more and better paper-workers.

In 1900 there were less than 500,000 students studying English in our schools. At the moment, there are nearly five and a half million. In this fifty-year period, the population of our country has only doubled while the number studying English has been multiplied elevenfold. I cannot prove it of course, but I would bet my bottom dollar that the top 500,000 of today's five and a half million are as able writers as most of the 500,000 high school students in 1900. This is a fairly safe bet since the 1900 figure is at least in some degree a cross section of the population whereas the 1950 figure is the top 9%.

CULTURE MAKES ITS DEMANDS

But the point that I am making is that the major influence on curriculum has not been tests or college requirements, but the demands of the culture. If this point is true, then it should also be true that subjects desirable from the point of view of colleges and equally necessary to the culture should have increased in popularity. Still other subjects required by the colleges, but unnecessary to the culture, should have waned in popularity. Both of these conclusions prove to be true.

The societal and economic reasons for the increase in enrollments during the last fifteen years in English, Social Studies, the Sciences, Mathematics, Italian, and Spanish will occur to everyone.

Subjects relating directly to business, such as bookkeeping, typing, shorthand, and so forth, which occupied a negligible part of the high school curriculum before World War I, have grown to occupy a sizable—and some would say an alarming—portion of it.

The declining societal demand for Latin undoubtedly accounts for the steady percentage decrease in enrollment in this subject and the

Statistics of Enrollment*

NATIONAL POPULATION (1950)	150,697,000	HIGHER EDUCATION ENROLLMENT (1950)	2,659,021
AGE 18	2,139,000	ENTERED COLLEGE	363,000

Public and Non-Public Secondary School Enrollment

PUBLIC (1949):		NON-PUBLIC (1948):	
9th grade	1,641,406	9th grade	162,551
10th "	1,490,628	10th "	152,528
11th "	1,241,505	11th "	140,364
12th "	1,025,913	12th "	129,276
Total enrolled, 1949	5,399,452	Total enrolled, 1948	584,719
Graduated in 1948	1,189,909	Graduated in 1947	116,731

Non-Public Secondary School Enrollment by Control (1948)

DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS:		GRADUATED IN 1947:	
Roman Catholic	476,666	Roman Catholic schools	85,879
Other churches	39,242	Other non-public schools	30,852
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	68,811		

Public School Enrollment in Certain Subjects (1950)

ENGLISH		SCIENCE	
Third year	1,187,868	Biology	986,361
Fourth year	836,483	Chemistry	405,131
		Physics	277,550
SOCIAL STUDIES		MATHEMATICS	
American History	1,199,806	Intermediate algebra	292,785
LANGUAGES		Trigonometry	108,551
Second year**	418,722	Solid geometry	93,944
Third year**	80,124		

Public School Languages Enrollment by Subject and Year of Study (1950)

LANGUAGE:	Second Year	Third Year	LANGUAGE:	Second Year	Third Year
Spanish	156,032	28,463	German	16,235	3,599
Latin	155,809	22,782	Greek	192	79
French	90,646	25,280	Italian (all years)	16,148	

* Based on Biennial Surveys of Education, U. S. Office of Education.

** French, German, Latin, Spanish.

numerical decrease since 1934. However, classicists will be happy to note that enrollment in Latin is still nearly twice as large as it was in 1900.

Greek has not fared as well. The total public school enrollment in Greek in 1949 was 227 in first-year Greek, 192 in second-year Greek, and 79 in third-year Greek. Apparently our Greek test enrolled the entire Greek-studying population. The Greek teachers must have brought them in handcuffed.

REQUIREMENTS LIMIT APPLICANTS

In framing and administering admissions requirements, colleges would do well to consider the influence of admissions requirements on the flow of applicants. According to a study made by the Board for the Commission on Financing Higher Education, the total number of applicants to American colleges is about 420,000.

However, enrollment in a third year of a language in public schools is just over 80,000 and in all schools probably under 100,000. A three-year language requirement, therefore, cuts the applicant group by at least 75%.

Enrollment in Intermediate Algebra is about 300,000. A third year of mathematics eliminates about 120,000 possible applicants.

Enrollment in trigonometry, despite the fact that it is at an all-time high, is less than 120,000. Engineering schools with this requirement can draw from less than 30% of available applicants.

The member colleges of the Board in fact draw largely from a much smaller group of college applicants than 420,000. They draw from the 210,000 aspirants who are in the first quarter of the age group in ability and who are therefore estimated to stand at least at 50-50 chance of success in a four-year college.

Even in this group a maximum of four out of ten can offer a third year of language and no more than one out of two can offer trigonometry.

It is not generally realized that every time a college states a requirement, it defines a measurable population from which the admissions officer can draw. For example, let us take the case

of a college for women which draws from the first quarter of the age group in ability and which requires three years of one language for entrance. The number of possible applicants for this college is reduced from 420,000 to 35,000 by its three requirements: sex, ability, and language study. The number of applicants is cut to 140,000 by the "women only" requirement. It is reduced to 70,000 by the top-quarter requirement, since only one-half of the applicants fall within this category. The figure drops to about 35,000, the number of girls who study three years of a language, if that language requirement is used.

When you divide that 35,000 by 48 states (although the distribution is by no means equal), you have less than 1,000 applicants so qualified per state—and you understand why admissions officers get gray hairs.

When you divide the same 35,000 by 1,000 accredited institutions, you get 35 candidates so qualified per institution, which explains why admissions officers' gray hairs turn white.

The effect of a selective service draft of 18-year olds without any deferments can be computed. It will reduce the male applicant group 10% for every 105,000 drafted (105,000 is 10% of the male age group).

Similar computations can be made by region or state and are even more discouraging. For example, in North Carolina in 1950 there were only fifty-eight public school students studying a third year of a language.

PURPOSE SHOULD COME FIRST

I have come to the conclusion that a college should define its purpose and, after defining its purpose should determine the level of ability which permits of a reasonable chance of success at the college, and use aptitude measures to determine what students reach this level. These tests then become talent searching devices rather than screening devices. A college should then study the statistics of the population it serves and should set its subject matter requirements realistically in accordance with what stu-

dents are actually studying and the number of students studying these subjects. The effect of this good use of the influence of tests and entrance requirements on college and school relations, on the rise of applications for admission, and on the improvement of the quality of student bodies would come as a surprising and pleasing shock.

To this discussion of the influence of tests and college requirements, I should like to add a footnote, and that is that the sometimes overlooked incidents of a testing program are often influential. The seeking and finding power that I have discussed above is very strongly affected by such matters as the test fee, the number of times per year tests are offered, the length of the testing period, the complexity of the application and instructions, the convenience of centers, the length of time between the registration period and the testing date, the length of time for reporting after the testing date and the use to which test scores are put.

If you want to keep able students out of col-

lege, we can set up for you a program with a high fee, in which a long battery of tests requiring several days is given at few centers once a year, and in which registration must be made very early, and scores sent out very late. This has a familiar ring to oldsters who went through the early testing days.

On the other hand, if you wish to minimize the bad and maximize the good influence of tests, that is, to make it possible to conduct a wide and simple talent search, you will urge us to work toward setting up a short battery of tests, for which no prior application is needed, which is offered many times a year at a large number of convenient centers and for which scores are promptly reported. Also, you would urge us to test at lower grade levels and to improve the use of test scores so that every person into whose hands the scores are placed will be able to make a just estimate of their meaning.

It is toward this millennium which some of us are happily—and some of us perhaps not so happily—moving.

Statistics of College Entrance*

POPULATION	Total in group	In ablest fourth of age group	Top fourth loss
National total	150,697,000		
Age 18	2,100,000		
Entered high school	1,600,000	525,000	
Non-graduates	400,000	105,000	105,000
Graduates	1,200,000	420,000	
College applicants	420,000	210,000	210,000
Entered college	363,000	210,000	
Not in top one-fourth	153,000		
TOP ONE-FOURTH LOST			315,000
Salvageable at high school level by financing			26,000
Salvageable at college entrance level:			
by financing			70,000
by motivation			35,000
by other guidance			23,000
TOP ONE-FOURTH SALVAGEABLE			154,000
TOP ONE-FOURTH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES SALVAGEABLE WITHOUT FINANCE			58,000

* Based on unpublished study by the College Board for the Commission on Financing Higher Education.

News of the Board

Candidates Increase

Incomplete registration figures point to a possible total of 90,000 final and preliminary Board candidates this year, an increase of more than 15,000 over 1950-51.

As the table printed in the February issue of the *Review* showed, 87 of the Board's 134 member colleges now require all candidates for admission to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The table also listed 38 member colleges as requiring the Achievement Tests of all candidates for admission. This number has since been reduced to 37 through a correction received from Wilson College, which requires or recommends the Achievement Tests only of certain candidates for admission.

Uniform Acceptance Date

Pennsylvania College for Women and Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart have notified the Board that they wish to be added to the list of 82 colleges reported in the February issue of the *Review* as observing the May 19 uniform acceptance date. In the case of Manhattanville, scholarship candidates are not included.

General Composition Test

Orders received in April for a form of the experimental General Composition Test offered to schools and colleges at cost for their own purposes indicated that the test will be administered to more than 7,000 students this month by their schools.

The tests are sold in specimen sets for \$1 each, or in quantities of more than five for 25¢ each. Materials include the test, suggestions for reading and scoring, grading sheets, and essay books.

Board Meetings

Regional meetings in Winnetka, Illinois, on March 22, and New York City on April 2, attracted close to 400 school and college representatives for discussions of the Board's tests and general problems of college admissions. Representatives to the Midwest Regional Conference, sponsored by the Board, were guests of the New Trier Township High School. The New York meeting was held at the Hotel Biltmore.

The regular fall meeting of the Board will be at the Biltmore on October 29.

THE COLLEGE BOARD REVIEW

News and Research of the
College Entrance Examination Board

Published three times a year by the
College Entrance Examination Board
425 West 117th Street, New York 27, N.Y.

Elected Officers

Katharine E. McBride	<i>Chairman</i>
Samuel T. Arnold	<i>Vice-Chairman</i>
Claude M. Fuess	<i>Custodian</i>
John I. Kirkpatrick	<i>Custodian</i>
Archibald MacIntosh	<i>Custodian</i>

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**ex officio*

Appointed Officers

Frank H. Bowles	<i>Director</i>
William C. Fels	<i>Secretary</i>
S. Donald Karl	<i>Editor</i>

The College Entrance Examination Board is composed of 134 member colleges and 22 member educational associations. Each member college has two representatives on the Board. Member associations have from one to five representatives. Members and their representatives are listed in the *Annual Report of the Director*.

Board Publications

Annual Report of the Director, 1950. Description of Board activities, lists of members, examiners, readers. Contains a section, "Data for Interpreting the Tests." 83 pages. \$.50.

Bulletin of Information and Sample Tests. Advice to candidates and parents, dates of examinations, registration and fees, description of tests, sample questions. 56 pages. Free.

College Board Review. News and research of the College Entrance Examination Board. Subscription: one year, \$.50; two years, \$1. Extra copies, when available, are \$.25 each, six for \$1. Special prices for larger orders.

College Handbook. Descriptions of each of the 134 member colleges—their study programs, admission terms, freshman year expenses, scholarships and other aid, and to whom to write for information. A special section on national scholarship programs. Also, listings of colleges by sex of students, region and enrollment, and a table of Army, Navy, and Air R.O.T.C. units. 292 pages. \$1.

The College Board, Its First Fifty Years, by Claude M. Fuess. "The full story of the College Entrance Examination Board's contribution to twentieth-century education in America." Published by Columbia University Press, New York, 1950. 224 pages. \$2.75.

Order from the Secretary, College Entrance Examination Board, 425 West 117 Street, New York 27, N. Y.

Dates, Tests, Fees: 1952

EXAMINATION DATES

May 17, 1952
August 13, 1952
December 6, 1952

EXAMINATION PROGRAMS*

Morning Program

Scholastic Aptitude Test
(Verbal Section)
(Mathematical Section)

Afternoon Program

(a maximum of three afternoon tests)

English Composition	Chemistry
Social Studies	Physics
French Reading	Intermediate
German Reading	Mathematics
Latin Reading	Advanced
Spanish Reading	Mathematics
Biology	Spatial Relations
Pre-Engineering Science Comprehension	

EXAMINATION FEES

Morning Program and	
Afternoon Program	\$12
Morning Program only	6
Afternoon Program only	8

* The College Transfer Test, for students transferring from one college to another, is offered on the same dates and at the same centers as the College Entrance Tests. It is administered in the morning. The fee is \$6. Bulletins of Information and application blanks for the College Transfer Test will be sent upon request. Address the College Entrance Examination Board, Box 592, Princeton, N. J., or Box 9896, Los Feliz Station, Los Angeles 27, Cal.

